

MAIDEN BRADLEY PRIORY, WILTSHIRE, AND KIDDERMINSTER CHURCH, WORCESTERSHIRE

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Let all who are, and are to come, know that I have conceded and given in perpetual alms to the leper women of Bradley the churches of my manors,that is, the church of Rockbourne and the church of Kidderminster Wherefore I will and firmly order that the same leper women shall have and possess the said churches with all their appurtenances for all time.

In these familiar and confident terms Manasser Biset, steward of King Henry II, set in being an association between what was to become the priory of Maiden Bradley (Wilts)<>, of which he was the founder, and the church of Kidderminster (Worcs), one of the manors he had received from the king <>. Little could he have imagined, however, the difficulties which the priory was to encounter in maintaining that association in accordance with his wishes. Man of affairs though he was, and often though he must have heard talk at the king's court of the problems which religious houses experienced in their tenure of parish churches, he cannot have foreseen that the permanent establishment of Maiden Bradley's position at Kidderminster would have to wait until the fourteenth century, when the ecclesiastical world would be peopled by a range of functionaries, such as archdeacons' officials and notaries public, quite foreign to his own experience.

In fact, Maiden Bradley's tenure of the church of Kidderminster was fraught with difficulties almost from the start, and so complicated did it become that, when the priory's rights were finally secured in 1340, one of the community (possibly the prior) wrote or commissioned an account of the saga, which has fortunately survived. It is contained in B.L. Additional Manuscript 37503, a small and rather scrappy fourteenth-century cartulary of the priory relating mainly to its Kidderminster possessions. Under the title *Processus ecclesie de Kyderm(instre)*, and occupying 26½ folios<³>, the account consists of transcripts of a variety of deeds and legal instruments ranging in date from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries and connected by a continuing narrative. It sets out the story as seen from the priory's point of view, along with the texts of documents which at successive stages supported the priory's case. In general, these documentary texts are full transcripts of the originals, most of which are now lost<⁴>, but the recording of witnesses is very uneven, for, although occasionally the witness list appears complete, more often it is either severely truncated or omitted altogether. In one or two cases, however, the names of the witnesses can be supplied from other surviving copies.

The value and interest of this record for the historian lie in its very completeness,

for, while most of Maiden Bradley's difficulties in holding on to Kidderminster church were not unique, and many individual documents of other houses survive to indicate the vulnerability of monastic tenure of parish churches, only rarely did a religious house suffer such a variety and succession of problems or go to the lengths of writing out the entire story. The record is instructive in other ways, too, not least in that it preserves documents of very diverse character which illustrate in context the activities of a variety of ecclesiastical officers at different dates within the period covered by the account. Although it has been used by a number of historians in the past, most extensively by the Revd. J.R. Burton in his *History of Kidderminster*, which appeared in 1890^{<5>}, and although two of the episcopal acts it contains have been printed in modern times, the manuscript as a whole has never been published. It is the purpose of this essay to examine again the history of Maiden Bradley's rights in the church of Kidderminster, paying particular attention to the passages of connecting narrative between the documents, for, while most of these appear in Burton's work, the rarity of his book renders it generally inaccessible and, quite separately from that consideration, historical research since his day has so deepened our understanding of the technicalities of monastic possession of parish churches that a fresh look at this fascinating story is now called for. In general, the sequence of events and documents in the manuscript, which is basically chronological, will be adhered to in this essay, but occasionally, where the manuscript's ordering appears confused, especially with regard to developments in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, it will be necessary for clarity's sake to depart from it.

The story with which we are concerned is basically this. At some time in the years 1155-8 Manasser Biset gave his church of Kidderminster to the leper house of Maiden Bradley. The gift was confirmed by, among others, Roger, bishop of Worcester, with permission to appropriate the church after the death of the incumbent rector. Appropriation was achieved in the early thirteenth century, but, for reasons which will be explained later, the priory's interest in the church was soon curtailed so that by 1240-1 it had lost not only the rectory but the advowson as well and retained only a portion of tithes in the parish to the value of 20 marks. Even this was potentially under threat in the ensuing tithe dispute until re-affirmed to the priory in 1265. Between 1265 and 1276 the advowson of the rectory was restored to it, and from 1276 the priory exercised the advowson and continued to receive its portion in tithes down to the 1330s. Then began a process to recover the appropriation, which was achieved in principle in 1335 and took effect in 1340 on the death of the last rector.

Although Manasser Biset's deed of gift is not the earliest charter cited in the record (since Henry II's confirmation in fact antedates it by a number of years), it is fitting that the manuscript deals with it first. The account begins:

The lord Manasser Biset, founder of the house of leper women of Bradley, conveyed the church of Kidderminster to the house of Bradley

after the death of Robert de Hurecote, the parson, then living, by this charter. (fol. 30r)

There follows the text of Manasser's charter<6>, which gives in free alms the churches of his manors of Rockbourne (Hants) and Kidderminster, with the assent and by the authority of the two respective diocesans, Henry of Winchester and Roger of Worcester, the gift in each case to take effect after the deaths of the incumbent parsons, Crispin and Robert de Hurecote, respectively. The donor, following the practice of his royal master's writing office, 'wills and firmly orders' that the leper women shall have and possess the churches freely for ever, with all appurtenances and quit of all evil customs (*quiete de omnibus consuetudinibus malis*). From the references to the bishops the charter can be dated between 23 August 1164, when Roger of Worcester was consecrated, and 8 August 1171, when Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, died.

However, Manasser had already given the churches before this time, since his gift was confirmed by Henry II in a charter which dates from the years 1155-8 and may possibly belong to the early part of 1158. The priory account reads:

And the lord king of the English, Henry II, confirmed the said gift by his charter in these words, (fol. 30r)

after which comes the royal confirmation<7> citing all the details contained in Manasser's charter, except that the parson of Kidderminster is called simply Robert and, more significantly perhaps, all reference to the diocesan bishops is omitted. The text lacks the list of witnesses, but their names are preserved in an enrolled *inspeximus* of Edward III in 1335<8> and include William, the king's brother, who died 30 January 1164, and Warin fitz Gerold the chamberlain, who held office from Michaelmas 1155 until his death some time before Michaelmas 1158<9>. The *inspeximus* also preserves the place date, *Broothestram* in the New Forest, which, though now unidentifiable, may have been somewhere near Brockenhurst (Hants), where the king is known to have stayed and granted other charters at some time early in 1158 when Warin fitz Gerold was still alive <10>.

Between Manasser's charter and the king's confirmation, the record inserts a confirmation by Manasser's son, Henry Biset, introducing it as follows:

And Henry Biset, heir of the said Manasser, confirmed the same gift, the said parson Robert being still alive, by this charter. (fol. 30r)

The text of the confirmation, which can be dated to 1187 x 1195, follows very closely that of his father's charter<11>.

Preceding this in date, but appearing in the account after Henry II's confirmation, came the confirmation by the diocesan, Roger of Worcester, with

permission to appropriate. The account reads:

Similarly, Roger bishop of Worcester confirmed that gift and conceded the said church in appropriation in this form. (fol. 30v)

In the act which follows the bishop declares, after a somewhat lengthy *arenga*, that, at the request of Manasser Biset and Henry II, he confirms the church of Kidderminster to the leper women of Bradley, which Manasser *tanquam advocatus* gave and the king confirmed to them, adding that after the death of the incumbent parson, Robert, they may without contradiction convert the church *in usus suos proprios*. The text in the record lacks witnesses, but these are known from the original which, though now lost, was formerly in the College of Arms and was printed in the nineteenth century<12>. The first witness is Simon, archdeacon of Worcester, who assumed that office in 1167. The act may therefore be dated between 1167 and 1177 when Manasser Biset, who was clearly still living at the time, died.

At this point the record proceeds directly to the appropriation itself, which was secured in the early thirteenth century, in order probably to juxtapose it with Bishop Roger's permission to appropriate, but other events intervened which were in the long run to upset the priory's tenure. We move, therefore, a little further in the record, to the following narrative:

Meanwhile, the said Robert, parson of the church of Kidderminster, being still alive, the house of Bradley with the consent of the same parson Robert presented master Adam de Hurecote to the perpetual vicarage in the same church, who would as their vicar pay to the said Robert 100s. (annually) and (afterwards) to the house of Bradley 100s. (annually). And indeed Adam was admitted to the said vicarage and instituted as perpetual vicar by the lord Henry, bishop of Worcester, on this presentation, and afterwards Mauger, bishop of Worcester, confirmed in writing this act of his predecessor in this form. (fol. 31r)

What follows is an *inspeximus* by Bishop Mauger, dating 1200 x 1203<13>, of an act by his penultimate predecessor as bishop of Worcester, Henry de Sully (1193-5), by which the latter admitted and instituted Adam de Hurecote as perpetual vicar of Kidderminster on the presentation of the leper women of Bradley and with the consent of Robert the parson, to whom the vicar would pay 100s. annually; but there is no mention of 100s. payable to Maiden Bradley<14>. Nevertheless, what was happening is clear enough. The priory, having secured from Bishop Roger an appropriation to take effect in the future after the death of the sitting parson, sought to hasten it by pensioning off the parson and establishing a perpetual vicarage. The vicarage was not, however, of the fully ordained type which was soon to become normal, with certain revenues specifically assigned to the vicar, but of the transitional type in which the vicar received the revenues of the church in full and paid a pension to the appropriating house or, as in this case, to the previous parson<15>.

Not long afterwards the parson died, thus enabling the formalities of the appropriation to be completed by the induction of the leper women into the parsonage, or rectory. This took place some time during the rule of Mauger, bishop of Worcester (1200-1212), as is clear from a document which appears in the account immediately after Bishop Roger's confirmation, under this rubric:

Letter testimonial concerning the induction of the aforesaid church by the dean of Kidderminster. (fol. 30v)

It is in fact a notification by Calixtus, rural dean of Kidderminster, addressed generally, that on a mandate of Mauger, bishop of Worcester, he has inducted the leper sisters of Bradley, in the person of Andrew their proctor, into corporal possession of the parsonage of the church of Kidderminster<16>. Although no reference is made to him here, it is clear from later evidence that Adam de Hurecote, instituted as perpetual vicar in 1193 x 95, remained in position and was presumably henceforth to pay to Maiden Bradley as the new corporate parson, or rector, the annual pension of 100s. previously paid to Robert de Hurecote. Thus, although the priory had secured the appropriation of the church by 1212 at the latest, it did not have direct seisin of the revenues of the church. These continued to be held by the perpetual vicar, who merely paid a pension. This was a potentially vulnerable position for a religious house to be in at this time, for, since in these years the fully developed perpetual vicarage with assigned revenues for the vicar was increasingly taking the place of the pension-paying vicarage, the latter was coming to look little different from a rectory paying a pension to a religious house. Several instances in this period are known in which the status of a pension-paying vicar came gradually, but rather inevitably, to be regarded as little different, if at all, from that of a rector. In some cases his title actually changed over a number of years from 'perpetual vicar' to 'rector'<17>. When this happened, the rights of the appropriating house might be placed in jeopardy, especially if another party was ready to exploit the situation for his own ends.

Precisely this occurred at Kidderminster, where, however, the priory's difficulties were made worse by the fact that its own patron was ranged against it<18>. After Bishop Mauger's *inspeximus* noted above, the priory account continues with the following rather longer narrative:

Meanwhile, after the death <19> of the said vicar Adam (de Hurecote), the prior, brothers and sisters of the house of Bradley presented a certain master Robert to the said vicarage being vacant. And John Biset, son and heir of the said Henry Biset, lord of the manor of Kidderminster, presented to the said church someone else. And when the dispute over this lasted beyond six months, the lord William de Blois, then bishop of Worcester, collated the church by devolved right to a certain master Thomas of Upton, and conceded 20 marks by the name of perpetual benefice to the leper women of Bradley, patrons of the said church, to be

received annually from the said church by the hand of the rector (*sic*) of the same; and concerning this he made his letters patent for them in this form. (fol. 31v)

The act of Bishop William de Blois which follows must date between 1218 and 1228, but the limits may be as narrow as 1222 x 28<2>. It concedes to the leper sisters a benefice of 20 marks in Kidderminster church, in which they have the right of patronage, to be received annually in the name of a perpetual benefice by the hand of him *qui eandem ecclesiam pro tempore optinebit* in two instalments, namely, 10 marks each at Michaelmas and Easter. This act has at least two curious features: firstly, its unequivocal declaration that Maiden Bradley has the patronage of the church (despite the claim by John Biset referred to in the preceding narrative) and, secondly, the vague description of the incumbent as 'he who shall hold the church for the time.' It looks very much as though the bishop sympathized with the priory's case and preferred not to name the incumbent as rector, for to do so would inevitably weaken the effect of the recent appropriation. Nevertheless, of course, the bishop could not easily refrain from collation on his own authority when the dispute over patronage had exceeded the time allowed in canon law for a benefice to remain vacant< 21>. After all, it was necessary for the bishop, as supreme pastor of the diocese, to see that the cure of souls in every parish was maintained.

William de Blois's act was confirmed by Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, although the text which follows in the record, under the rubric,

Confirmation of the archbishop of Canterbury concerning the same pension, (fol.31v)

mistakenly calls the bishop 'Walter'. It is fortunate that the original survives with the correct name 'William'<22>, for otherwise one might have supposed Langton's act to be confirming an act of Walter de Gray, bishop of Worcester (1214-15), of which nothing else would have been known.

It is virtually certain that the bishop's act was also ratified by Prior William and the convent of Worcester, although the record reproduces their act in another place, thereby relating it to the earlier appropriation, and crucially misquotes one word in the text. The act appears in the record under the rubric:

Confirmation of the prior and chapter of Worcester concerning the appropriation of the church of Kidderminster. (fol. 31r)

It is in fact nothing of the kind. The text purports to be Worcester cathedral's confirmation of the gift by William de Blois to the house of Bradley 'of the church of Kidderminster as it has been justly and canonically collated to them,' but the correct text, which survives in a thirteenth-century copy <23>, has the cathedral priory confirming the bishop's gift *in* the church of Kidderminster, which is clearly a very

different matter. The date cannot be earlier than 1222 <24>, and the act would in any case make little sense unless it relates to the concession of the 20 marks. Further proof that this was the case is provided by Bishop Walter de Cantilupe's statement in 1240-41 that William de Blois had made the grant 'with the consent of the chapter.' <25>

The John Biset who thus contested the priory's right of patronage, and therefore *a fortiori* the appropriation, was the younger son of Henry Biset (who died in 1208) and younger brother of the latter's elder son and heir, William, who died childless in 1220 <26>. Tenure of the Biset lordships had been disturbed in the second half of King John's reign. Following the death of Henry Biset in 1208, leaving a minor as his heir, wardship was granted to William of Huntingfield <27>, but, when the latter joined the rebel cause later in the reign, his lands were seized by the Crown <28> and eventually, in 1215 and in 1216, Kidderminster was granted entirely away from the Biset family <29>. Although their lands were restored to the Bisets after the king's death, doubt exists as to whether William Biset ever held the manor of Kidderminster; by calling John Biset the son and heir of Henry, the priory record would seem to support the view that he did not. Be that as it may, John was certainly in possession in the 1220s and was clearly in this respect no particular friend of the priory which his grandfather had founded. Moreover, his waywardness was not yet at an end, for, as the priory account continues:

Meanwhile, the said John Biset, who unjustly began an action over the right of patronage of the said church, withdrew from the suit and remitted his right to the house of Bradley by his written deed <30>. But nevertheless, after the death of the said Thomas (of Upton) the rector (*sic*), the same John Biset presented a certain Roger of Essex to the church of Kidderminster, who was admitted and instituted to it against the said prior's objection, in such a way, however, that the said prior, brothers and sisters were to have specific tithes in the parish which Walter, bishop of Worcester, with the consent of the said Roger of Essex, then rector of the place, assigned to them by his charter, as follows. (fols. 31v-32r)

Then comes the act of Walter de Cantilupe, bishop of Worcester, dated in the fourth year of his pontificate (May 1240 - May 1241) <31>. In it he declares that, whereas Bishop William de Blois conveyed to the leper house of Bradley, with the consent of (his) chapter, a rent (*sic*) of 20 marks in the church of Kidderminster to be paid by the rector, he has now assigned specific tithes in the parish for the annual rent of 20 marks, with the assent of the patron (*sic*) and at the express wish of Roger of Essex, the rector. The tithes are then defined as the tithes of corn and hay from all the lands in that part of the parish lying between the rivers Severn and Stour with certain listed exceptions.

This is followed in the account by John Biset's letter to the bishop consenting to

the assignment and (rather surprisingly in the light of his other activities) requesting that the bishop might be pleased to amend the portion, in as much as he was able, to the priory's advantage<32>. The little group of texts is completed by the consent of the rector to the same assignment, which is inserted at the bottom of the previous folio and bears the rubric:

Letter of consent of Roger of Essex concerning the portion of tithes which W(alter) bishop of Worcester assigned to the prior and convent for the said annual pension of 20 marks. (fol. 31v)

The rector's letter ratifies the 'extent' which the bishop has made for the portion of Kidderminster church to be received annually by the leper ladies of Bradley as a perpetual benefice.

The message of these documents of 1240-41 is clear enough. Not only had the priory's appropriation of the church definitely lapsed, since the benefice of the local incumbent was once more regarded by all concerned as a rectory, but the priory had been obliged to abandon its claim even to the advowson of the church, for the bishop himself referred to another as patron and that person was clearly John Biset. It is indeed remarkable, if we may believe the priory account, that, despite John's having earlier released his right of patronage to the priory, the bishop should have accepted his presentation of Roger of Essex at the vacancy next ensuing. However, as a *quid pro quo*, and no doubt to compensate in particular for the extinction of the appropriation, the priory secured a more profitable portion of greater tithes in place of a fixed annual pension. From this point of view, the distinction drawn in the rubric of the rector's consent between the new 'portion' and the earlier 'pension' is critical.

Rather more than a year later at the earliest the assignment of tithes was confirmed by Prior Richard (1242-52) and the convent of Worcester, their act appearing next in the account <33>, but Maiden Bradley was soon to become involved in a tithe dispute with the next rector of Kidderminster, which might have led to a reduction or revision of this portion, even though in the outcome it did not. The dispute in question arose after John Biset's death. He died in the course of 1241, leaving three daughters as co-heiresses and survived by his widow, Alice, daughter of Thomas Basset of Headington, who held the manor of Kidderminster in dower for life <34>. What then happened is set forth in the record in this way:

And after the death of Sir John Biset, Lady Alice Basset, his wife, received in dower the whole manor of Kidderminster with the advowson of the said church. And she, after the death of Roger of Essex, rector of the church of Kidderminster, presented master John de la Mare to the whole portion which his predecessor held, and the lord bishop so admitted him. The prior, brothers and sisters were for a very long time in litigation with him both in England and in the Court of Rome before

various judges, as appears in divers writings in the treasury of the said prior and convent. At length the suit between the parties was settled in the form which follows. (fol. 32v)

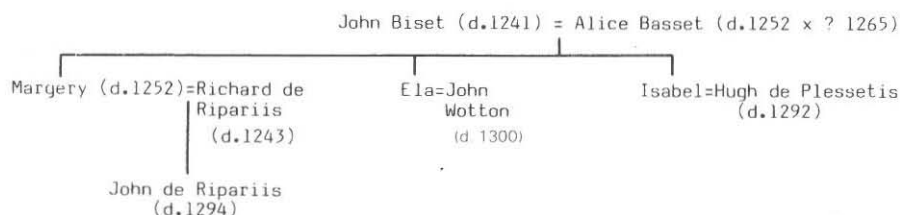
Then is entered the text of a complicated agreement over tithes between the rector, John de la Mare, and the prior and convent of Maiden Bradley, dated at Kidderminster, 17 August 1265. The precise reason for the dispute is not explained, but the terms of the settlement suggest that it had arisen over tithes from the lands which the priory held in the parish. This is the first indication in the record of the priory's tenure of temporalities at Kidderminster, but we know from elsewhere in the cartulary and from other evidence that it had been given various estates and parcels of land in the parish from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century onward <35>. However, the fact that the dispute occurred at this time, rather than earlier, was probably connected with the priory's acquisition of a substantial new estate, consisting of a third part of the main Biset manor of Kidderminster, which it received in an exchange of lands made after the death of Alice Basset <36>, for such an addition to its landed possessions could easily have given rise to a dispute with the rector over the tithes due from it. If that was the occasion for the dispute, Alice Basset must have died some time before the date of the agreement over the tithes. The details of the settlement need not detain us, but the main outcome was that the prior and convent were confirmed in possession of all greater tithes in that part of the parish assigned to them by Bishop Walter de Cantilupe, and were to receive all lesser tithes of lands and animals in their possession as they stood at that date, further specific arrangements being added to cover the destination of tithes from these lands in the event of changes in tenure or use of any part of them. Nine months later, in May 1266, the agreement was inspected and confirmed by Edward, dean of Wells, and master Osmund, canon of St. Mary's Warwick and doctor of canon law, to whom jurisdiction belonged as papal auditors deputed in the case <37>.

It is clear from what has been said above that, during Alice Basset's widowhood, the advowson of Kidderminster church remained with her as lady of the manor. However, in the circumstances following her death some time between 1252 and (probably) 1265, when the manor was divided between the three co-heiresses of John Biset or their heirs, Maiden Bradley priory succeeded in recovering the advowson. The priory record explains the manner in which this occurred, although the account is rendered somewhat confusing and unsatisfactory by the omission of one crucial document, the text of which has fortunately survived elsewhere. The record reads as follows:

Meanwhile, after the death of the said Alice, widow of John Biset, the said manor with the advowson of the church descended to the three heirs of the said Sir John Biset, viz., to Sir John de Ripariis, son and heir of Margery, the said Sir John's eldest daughter, and to the two younger sisters of the said Margery, namely, Ela and Isabel. These (two sisters) remitted all right which they had in the advowson of the said church to the aforesaid John de Ripariis, their nephew, for an annual rent of 2

marks which they have in the said manor by gift of the said Sir John de Ripariis. And, notwithstanding, Sir John de Wutton, who married the middle sister, lady Ela, remitted all his right which he could have in the said advowson to the prior and convent of Maiden Bradley in this form. (fol. 33v).

Before considering John Wotton's charter which follows, it may be useful to set out the relationships between the various members of John Biset's family mentioned in this account, along with other details of their marriages, in the following genealogical table^{<38>}:



According to the above narrative, after Alice Basset's death the manor of Kidderminster descended to Margery's son and her two sisters. It may therefore be concluded that Alice died after Margery's death, which took place in 1252.

John Wotton's charter bears the rubric:

Resignation of John de Wutton concerning the right of patronage. (fol. 33v)

It is, however, rather more than that, for, with the consent of his wife Ela, John confirms in free alms to the house of Bradley all the charters of its founders (i.e., the founder and his descendants) and the charters (*sic*) of confirmation of Sir John de Ripariis which the priory has concerning the advowson of the church of Kidderminster, so that after the death of John de la Mare, *nunc tenens*, the prior and convent may hold, possess and appropriate the church. The account does not include the charter(s) of John de Ripariis to which John Wotton refers, but the text of one such charter is known, giving in free alms to Prior John, the leper sisters and the brothers of Maiden Bradley certain land in Kidderminster and the advowson of the church^{<39>}. Among the witnesses to this deed are John Wotton himself and Hugh de Plessetis, knight, the husband of John Biset's youngest daughter. Furthermore, at the end of the priory record two further charters are added, by John Wotton and his wife Ela, and by Hugh de Plessetis and his wife Isabel, respectively, relinquishing their right in the advowson to the priory^{<40>}. Thus, by these concerted acts of all his heirs, John Biset's earlier intrusion into the advowson had been reversed.

All must have been completed by 1276 at the latest, for in that year the incumbent rector, who had been presented by Lady Alice, died and the priory now successfully exercised the advowson, as is clear from the next passage of narrative and associated documents in the record. The narrative states:

Afterwards, on the death of the said master John de la Mare, the prior and convent of Maiden Bradley presented to the said church thus vacant master William de la Lade, who was admitted at the presentation of the said religious, as appears from the inquest held for him in the form which follows. (fol. 34r)

Then comes an excellent example of a record of an inquest *de iure patronatus*, ordered by the bishop and held in the local rural deanery, which was normally the first step taken by the bishop on receipt of letters of presentation from a patron, in this instance Maiden Bradley priory in respect of Kidderminster church. The purpose of such an inquest was to ascertain for the bishop the information necessary to him before he could proceed further in filling the benefice in question. The required information was basically under two heads, concerning the benefice and advowson, on the one hand, and the fitness of the presentee, on the other, although the latter aspect might be supplemented from the early thirteenth century onward by personal examination of the candidate before the bishop or his representative^{<41>}. The inquest was initiated at this time by a mandate from the bishop to the relevant archdeacon or his official, one of whom or their representative would then convene a chapter of the clergy of the rural deanery in which the benefice lay and put to them a standard series of questions designed to discover whether the church concerned was in fact vacant; if so, when and how it became vacant; who the patron was and whether his claim was contested; whether any pensions were payable from the church, and to whom; and what was the value of the church^{<42>}.

The example with which we are concerned^{<43>} is in the name of H., official of the archdeacon of Worcester, and is addressed to the bishop, G., i.e., Godfrey Giffard. It begins typically by quoting the bishop's mandate for the holding of the inquest, dated 2 October 1276, and goes on to report the findings of the rural dean chapter held at Elmley Lovett in Kidderminster deanery on 13 October 1276. These were that the church of Kidderminster was vacant and became so on 10 September by the death of John de la Mare, last rector of the same excluding the priory's portion in tithes; that, as the result of developments since the deaths of Sir John Biset and his widow, Lady Alice, both of whom had presented to the church, the prior and convent had the right of presentation as true patrons by grant of Sir John de Ripariis, one of John Biset's heirs to whom the other heirs had remitted their rights^{<44>}; and that the church was not in dispute, paid no pension except in so far as the priory had its portion of tithes, and was worth in common years 12 marks per annum (this assessment being based almost certainly on the Valuation of Norwich of 1254)^{<45>}. Finally the inquest commented favourably on the fitness of the presentee for the benefice. Accordingly, William de la Lade was subsequently admitted and instituted to the rectory^{<46>}.

The priory could now reflect with satisfaction that it had effectively exercised the recently recovered advowson and that its presentation had been accepted, for until a patron had achieved this, whatever his deeds said, English law might allow him no more than a 'fictitious' or 'imaginary' right to the presentation^{<47>}, which could prove vulnerable in any future dispute over patronage. It was, therefore, vital for the priory to be able to show that its presentee had been duly admitted and instituted by the bishop. The priory account reveals awareness of this consideration in its record of successive presentations to the church in 1281 and 1306, for each of which it preserves documents fortifying the priory's rights. On the first of these occasions, however, the priory got itself into a potentially dangerous position by apparently presenting a clerk who, as we learn elsewhere, was found to be unsuitable, so that in consequence the bishop collated by devolved authority John de Ulbeton, or Ubeton, to the benefice^{<48>}. The natural inference to be drawn from this would be that John de Ubeton was the bishop's choice as replacement for a rejected candidate of the priory, but the record, while acknowledging the episcopal collation, claims that the priory had presented John as rector of Kidderminster. The narrative reads at this point:

And after the death of the said master William, rector of Kidderminster, the prior and convent presented sir John de Ubeton, and the lord bishop of Worcester collated the said church to the same presentee at the presentation of the same religious, as appears from the presentation, inquest and induction of the said rector in the form which follows.
(fol.34v)

This is followed by the texts of three documents: the (? supposed) letter of presentation from the prior and convent, the rural dean of Kidderminster's report of the inquest *de iure patronatus*, and the certificate of John's induction^{<49>}. The only one of these which refers to the bishop's collation is the last. The presentation, as it appears in the account, raises no problems; equally the report of the inquest quotes Giffard's mandate for it stating that the priory had presented John de Ubeton and urging maximum speed in the execution of the mandate, even though in the event the inquest was unable to pronounce on the suitability of the presentee because he was not a local man. The third document, however, the rural dean's certification to the bishop, dated 8 March 1281, that he had executed his mandate to induct John de Ubeton into the church, quotes the mandate with its statement that the bishop had collated the church to him, without reference to the priory's presentation. The whole episode is very curious, for the only explanation which seems to fit all the evidence is that the priory had indeed presented John de Ubeton, but that the bishop found him unfit and yet collated him on his own authority. If this explanation is regarded as unacceptable on the ground of improbability, one is driven to the conclusion that the priory's original candidate was rejected and replaced on episcopal authority by John de Ubeton, and that the record with which we are dealing has systematically disguised the fact.

Fortunately for the priory, no mistakes were made at the next vacancy in 1306 and its presentation was upheld on that occasion. As the record has it:

And when the said church became vacant by the resignation of the said John de Ubbeton, the prior and convent presented master Robert le Blake, who at their presentation was admitted, as appears from the inquest and his institution in the form which follows. (fol. 35v)

The report of the inquest *de iure patronatus* <50>, addressed by the archdeacon of Worcester's official to the vicar-general of William (Gainsborough), bishop of Worcester, was wholly favourable to the priory, even to the extent, if we may accept the record's copy, of stating that the priory had presented John de Ubeton at the previous vacancy. The inquest also makes clear that John had resigned *pro derelicta et notorie*, having acquired the church of Berwick (St. John, Wilts) in the diocese of Salisbury in the previous November <51>. When the inquest came to value the church, it clearly relied on the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV of 1291, for it declared the annual value to be 31 marks, which is exactly the sum recorded in the Taxation <52> and, moreover, represents a considerable increase on the value returned in the inquests of 1276 and 1281. The inquest had been held on 31 January 1306, and Robert le Blake's admission and institution as rector followed on 12 February <53>.

On the death of Robert le Blake in 1312, John de Carseleghe became rector at the priory's presentation <54>, but, apart from noting the fact, the record saw no need to copy out the documents relating to his appointment, probably because by this time the priory's right of patronage had been fully established by use as well as by documentary title. The record was concerned, however, to preserve an account of the priory's successful assertion in 1314, during this rector's incumbency, that its portion of tithes in the parish was immune from papal taxation. This is how the record describes the episode:

And when the said master Robert, rector of Kidderminster, died, the prior and convent presented master John de Carseleghe, who was admitted at their presentation and instituted as rector, as more fully appears from the inquest and institution of the said rector. This master John made suit on behalf of the prior against the abbot of St. Peter of Gloucester, then collector of tenths, who unjustly caused £13 4d (*sic*) to be levied in his time from the said religious of Bradley for their portion which they held in the said church of Kidderminster; in such a way that the said abbot satisfied the said religious of Bradley concerning the said money, as appears from the public instrument in the form which follows. (fol. 36r)

There follows the text of a notarial instrument, dated 3 June 1314, in the name of Nicholas of Bath, notary public <55>, testifying to the fact that the priory's proctor, master John de Carseleghe, produced before the abbot of Gloucester letters patent of

the commissaries of the bishops of Lincoln and London, principal collectors of the papal tenth, ordering the abbot not to tax the priory's portion, since the church of Kidderminster is assessed at 31 marks without mention of the priory's portion<sup>s 6sic)), which letters the abbot accepted and agreed to execute. The assessment of the church to which the commissaries of the principal collectors referred was, of course, the Taxation of Pope Nicholas, where, as they declared, there is no separate mention of the priory's portion<sup>s 7s 8

This following instrument makes it evidently clear that the prior of Bradley's portion in the church of Kidderminster is not assessed for a tenth, but ought to be immune from the payment of any tenth whatsoever, in the form which follows. (fol. 37r)

At first sight it may seem puzzling that the record should concern itself with this episode, which appears somewhat tangential to the main theme, but its reason for including it was in fact of central significance. The episode established in effect that the portion of tithes was to be considered as quite separate from the other spiritual revenues of the parish, since it was not included in the assessment of the church, and this was a point which, as we shall see, was to be of importance to the priory a couple of decades later<sup>s 9

Nevertheless, despite this victory, and apart from its substantial portion of tithes in the parish, the priory had still to recover the appropriation of the church, which had lapsed in the time of Bishop William de Blois. In fact, to read between the lines of the account, the priory had by now been deprived of the appropriation for so long that the prior and convent had all but forgotten that it had once taken place. Nonetheless, the appropriation was restored in principle in 1335 and brought into effect on the death of the last rector in 1340. Not surprisingly, the record devotes considerable space to explaining how this was achieved. The narrative continues thus:

While the aforesaid master John the rector was still living, Brother Henry of Frome, at that time prior, carefully examined the entire contents of the aforesaid proceedings and, thinking a great deal over the ancient right which had been lost unjustly and by negligence in the manner aforesaid, he sent one of his fellow canons, William of Chewton, to the Court of Rome to recover the former appropriation with a petition in the form which follows. (fol. 37v)

The petition<sup>s 10

hospital house of leper women of Maiden Bradley... of the Order of St. Augustine'. It asks the pope that, if the bishop of Worcester should find that the church of Kidderminster, in which they have the right of patronage, was at one time appropriated to them and that they lost the appropriation by their simplicity and ignorance (*per simplicitatem suam et ignoranciam*) in presenting various secular parsons to the church for forty years and more, he might restore them to their ancient right and status in the same, a suitable portion being reserved for a perpetual vicarage. In order, as they said, that the founder's wishes might be fulfilled, the petitioners sought permission to enter possession of the church after the death or resignation of John de Carseleghe, the rector, and they adduced as further reasons for their request, apart from their having no other ecclesiastical benefice appropriated to them, the facts that they bore a heavy burden in receiving guests, since their house was on the main road by Selwood Forest, and that their temporal possessions were small and much reduced by various exactions and by sterility and pestilence among their animals. The appeal was successful, for the pope, Benedict XII, responded by issuing two bulls which initiated the next stage in the process. The record triumphantly declares:

By the aforesaid petition the aforesaid William, envoy of the prior, obtained one bull, viz., *Ea que de bonis*, and another, as a precaution, concerning the intrusion of the aforesaid rector, which follow in this form. (fol. 38v)

It is clear, however, from what follows that the priory needed to rely only on the first of these bulls and that the second was probably obtained in case the bishop of Worcester should be unable to rule in its favour on the first.

The two bulls are dated at Avignon on 5 April and 1 April 1335, respectively<61>. The first, the *Ea que de bonis*, is a normal example of its type<62>, directing the bishop of Worcester to investigate Maiden Bradley's claim that certain of its possession have been wrongfully alienated to the grave injury of the priory and, if true, to procure the return of the same, notwithstanding any deeds of the priory to the contrary. The second commands the bishop to hear and settle without appeal the complaint from 'Henry the rector, commonly called the prior, and the brothers of the house of leper women of Maiden Bradley' that, although the church of Kidderminster is known to have been long canonically united to their house, John de Carseleghe, priest of the diocese of Worcester, has by his own audacity intruded himself and occupied it to the priory's prejudice and injury. This complaint was quite obviously a misrepresentation of the facts, since, as we have seen, John de Carseleghe had been admitted on the priory's presentation, but it is equally clear the priory did not proceed further on this bull, for the rector was allowed to remain in office until his death<63>.

In addition to taking these steps at Avignon, the priory also obtained from the king, Edward III, letters patent inspecting and confirming Henry II's charter of

confirmation of Manasser Biset's original gift. The letters patent were granted at York on 4 June and were duly entered in the record^{<64>}.

The next document to appear in the account is the all-important act by Simon Montacute, bishop of Worcester, re-affirming the former appropriation^{<65>}. It is dated 28 October 1335 and is addressed to the 'prior and convent of the hospital house of leper women of St. Mary of Maiden Bradley,' who, if help is not forthcoming, 'will be compelled to seek aid by begging.' The act declares that, having regard to the priory's having lost the former appropriation of the church 'by simplicity and ignorance' in presenting secular clerks to the same, the bishop, after deliberation with the prior and convent of Worcester cathedral, now confirms the previous appropriation and affirms that the church is and was appropriated to the priory. Therefore, after the death of the rector, the priory may possess it *in propriis usus*, subject to the formation of a perpetual vicarage of 25 marks, which the bishop shall ordain and to which the priory shall have the presentation. Also (and most interestingly) the priory shall pay annual pensions of 1 mark each to the bishop and to the cathedral priory of Worcester 'in recompense for the emoluments which we and our successors *sede plena*, and the prior and chapter *sede vacante*, might receive in times of vacancy of the same church by the custom of the diocese^{<66>}.' This provision related to the claim of the diocesan, or his cathedral chapter during vacancies in the see, to take the fruits of vacant benefices within the diocese. The 'custom' was not at all confined to the diocese of Worcester, however, and appears to have given rise throughout the English church in the thirteenth century to the diocesan officers known as sequestrators or sequestrators-general^{<67>}. At any rate, so important was this act of Simon Montacute that it was witnessed by a distinguished group which included the bishop's chancellor and official and two notaries public, Richard of Ledbury and Vincent de Tarenta, and was moreover engrossed in triplicate. One copy, sealed by Maiden Bradley priory, was to remain with the bishop and the other two, both sealed by the bishop, were to go to Maiden Bradley and Worcester cathedral priories, respectively.

The bishop's act was inspected and confirmed by the prior, Wolstan of Bransford, and convent of Worcester, who also issued separate letters approving the annual payment to them of 1 mark, both of which documents are entered in the record ^{<68>}. Next comes a commission from the bishop to the rural dean of Kidderminster to enquire into the annual value of the fruits, offerings, tithes, etc., of the church of Kidderminster, followed by the dean's detailed reply, dated 10 February 1336 ^{<69>}. The dean reported the fruits and profits of the church (with those of its dependent chapel at Mytton) to be worth £43 4s. 10½d. per annum, from which its annual financial burdens (including those that the priory would assume after securing possession), totalling £18 3s. 2½d., had to be deducted, leaving a net annual value of £25 1s. 8d. The dean's reply also contained a detailed valuation of the obventions and tithes which the priory received before the new appropriation (i.e., mainly its ancient portion), at a net annual value of £13 6s. 8d. (or 20 marks), but this was treated quite separately from the main valuation and did not affect it in any way.

The priory was described as having received its traditional revenues in the parish 'without burden', and this was clearly understood to include immunity from taxation, since liability for tenths was entered as an expense only under the main valuation of the church and not under the priory's income, thereby vindicating its resistance to papal taxation of its portion earlier in the century.

The record then enters the text of the ordination of the vicarage, to which the bishop proceeded on the basis of the dean's findings and which he published in an act given at Bredon on 12 April<70>. The bishop aimed at a vicarage of 25 marks (or £16 13s.4d), roughly two-thirds of the net annual value recorded by the rural dean. This meant that, discounting irregular and incidental expenses, the priory was to secure a rectorial benefice worth just over 12½ marks in addition to the portion of 20 marks it already received, which gives a total of just over 32½ marks per annum for the receipts of the priory once the appropriation had taken effect. Not surprisingly in a vicarage ordination at this time, the details are very full and were clearly designed to avoid all possibility of ambiguity in the future. However, reducing the terms to the basic principles which lay behind them, and ignoring the important exceptions which, as almost everywhere else, modified these in practice, it is clear that the perpetual vicar of Kidderminster was to receive essentially the same types of revenue traditionally (but not always) allocated to vicars since the early thirteenth century, namely, the lesser tithes of the parish and the altarage of the church. With these, apart from the exceptions, and some other items of revenue, he was to have a residence with curtilage and dovecote and 12 acres of land contained in a number of specified crofts. The vicar was to pay archidiaconal procurations, Peter's Pence and synodals and to bear all other ordinary financial burdens falling on a parish church, and the ordination concludes with provisions covering the division of responsibility between the vicar and the corporate rector in the maintenance and repair of the chancel of the parish church and its fittings. A little under a year later, in February 1337, the same bishop confirmed the appropriation and the ordination of the vicarage during his visitation of the diocese<71>.

The scene was now set in all respects for the appropriation to be carried into effect and waited only upon the death of the incumbent rector. When this occurred in 1340, the record describes the priory moving with such speed as to raise an understanding smile in the mind of the reader, for one can well sympathize with its almost desperate determination to ensure that nothing should go amiss on this occasion. The narrative at this point reads as follows:

As time went on and the venerable lord, the lord Simon bishop of Worcester frequently mentioned, was translated to the see of Ely, and the religious man, the lord Wolstan prior of Worcester, was promoted as bishop by the grace of God, master John de Carseleye, rector of the aforesaid church of Kidderminster, died. And immediately after his death the prior and convent were solemnly inducted into corporal possession of the aforesaid church by the venerable man, the official of

the archdeacon of Worcester, as more fully appears from the certification of the same official and from the letter testimonial of the lord bishop concerning the induction of the same religious in the form which follows. (fol. 47v)

The induction of the prior and convent in the person of their proctor took place on 20 July 1340, the date of the archdeacon's official's certification, which quotes Bishop Wolstan's mandate issued only the previous day at the episcopal manor of Blockley (Glos) <72>. The bishop's letter testimonial followed a few days later, on 25 July, from another episcopal manor at Hartlebury (Worcs) <73>. Thus, despite possible problems in keeping contact between the priory, their proctor, the archdeacon's official and the bishop, a task made more difficult by the bishop's being on the move from one residence to another, the procedures were certainly carried out with maximum speed and efficiency.

What was achieved was more impressive even than this, however, for on the same day as the priory was inducted into the rectory, the new vicar was inducted into the perpetual vicarage. The record conveys vividly the sense of urgency which attended these proceedings:

When the prior and convent had been thus inducted, immediately the same religious presented sir John de la Doune to the perpetual vicarage in the specific portions assigned in the ordination of the aforesaid vicarage. And he, being thus presented, immediately after luncheon following the induction of the prior and convent, was inducted at this presentation, as more fully appears from the presentation and induction of the same in the form which follows. (fol. 48r).

Then appears the priory's letter of presentation to the vicarage, followed by the letter testimonial of the archdeacon's official regarding both inductions (of the priory and of the vicar), dated 20 July <74>.

The appropriation had thus been fully implemented and all proceedings involving the induction of the priory and its vicar into their respective benefices completed on the same day. But this was not quite the end of the story which the record has to tell, for within five months the new vicar, being dissatisfied with his portion, had raised issue with the priory and had succeeded in obtaining a re-ordination of the vicarage. The next document cited in the record is a confirmation by Bishop Wolstan of Simon Montacute's act reviving the appropriation, which the record triumphantly regards as a culmination of the induction process of July 1340. The narrative reads:

And when the aforesaid prior and convent and their vicar had been inducted into corporal possession, as aforesaid, the same Bishop Wolstan ratified and confirmed the act of his predecessor, Simon, that is,

concerning the appropriation of the aforesaid church, in these words. (fol.49v).

There follows the bishop's *inspeximus* of Simon Montacute's act of 1335, which, it will be remembered, contained no details of the ordination, but merely the formal renewal of the appropriation. Moreover, the *inspeximus* is dated 6 December 1340, more than four months after the events of 20 July and abnormally late if it was meant to be closely associated with them <7>. On the contrary, it seems clear from what was to follow that Wolstan's *inspeximus* was in reality a preliminary move in a process of revision of the vicarage which was shortly to be carried out and to which the priory had been obliged to agree in order to settle its dispute with the new vicar. The priory's very understandable distaste at these developments is evident in the next, and final, passage of narrative:

When these things had thus been done and graciously completed, the said Sir John de la Doune, like an ungrateful man, a little time having elapsed since his peaceful possession of the said vicarage, began a suit over the insufficiency of his vicarage for the adequate support of the burdens incumbent upon him; and he (did so) by the counsel of the bishop's clerks and others of his friends, especially parishioners who perhaps wanted easy dues for their own advantage, seeing that the vicar resided personally among them; so that at length the prior and convent, compelled as it were by necessity and for the sake of securing peace, had to consent afresh to a new ordination of the aforesaid vicarage, in the form which follows. (fol. 50r)

The new ordination was issued on 18 December 1340 <8>, a mere twelve days after the *inspeximus* of the appropriation. It took the form of a confirmation by the bishop of proposals for the re-ordination of the vicarage submitted by the prior and convent in letters dated 11 December, which are quoted in the ordination along with the vicar's letter, dated 14 December, submitting himself to the bishop's judgement in the matter. It is thus extremely likely that the bishop already knew of the vicar's discontent, and the moves afoot to assuage it, when he granted the *inspeximus* on 6 December, a likelihood strengthened by the fact that, according to the narrative just quoted, the bishop's clerks were among those who had encouraged the vicar to prosecute his complaint. Exactly what lay behind this tantalisingly vague assertion, and precisely why the priory felt constrained to submit a revision of the vicarage which, as its letter to the bishop declared, it did not believe to be necessary, are now lost to us, but the result was a considerable enlargement of the vicar's portion in the church, even though it was to be burdened with a pension to the priory. The new ordination assigned to him the landed estate which the former rectors of Kidderminster had held with all its appurtenances, and all the greater and lesser tithes and other fruits which John de Carseleye, the last rector, had held, while the priory was basically confirmed in possession of its ancient portion of tithes in the parish and its demesne tithes. However, the vicar was henceforth to pay the priory 20

marks annually and to assume its former obligation to pay annually 1 mark each to the bishop of Worcester and the cathedral priory. He was also to pay all financial burdens falling on the church and to bear the cost of repairs to the chancel up to 40d. per annum<7>, any amount above which sum it was to be the priory's responsibility to pay. In purely financial terms this settlement would appear to be not unfavourable to the priory, for, if the ancient portion was still valued at 20 marks, the priory's annual receipts would now be 40 marks (the pension plus the portion), as against the 32½ marks it received under Montacute's ordination, and in addition it would no longer have to find the total of 2 marks annually for the bishop and the cathedral priory. Nevertheless, the priory had good reason to dislike the new arrangement because, on the one hand, the vicar had to a large extent recovered the position of the former rectors except in name and, on the other, apart from its ancient portion and demesne tithes, the priory had lost immediate seisin of the fruits of the church, more especially of the greater tithes. It is true that the priory was to receive in compensation an annual pension of 20 marks<78>, but this was much less acceptable, since the pension would remain fixed unless adjusted by episcopal authority alone and, like all such payments, would probably not reflect the real value of the tithes and other fruits which the priory had lost. No doubt after the Black Death, when the population and tithe yields were to be severely reduced, at least for a time, the priory would be able to congratulate itself on having a fixed and assured pension, but that was as yet some years in the future and could not have been foreseen by the compiler of the priory record. To him the revision of the vicarage was to the disadvantage of the priory.

In spite of this 'sting in the tail', however, the appropriation stood. For the best part of two centuries the community of Maiden Bradley had striven to maintain its rights in the church of Kidderminster, at times with more energy and less 'simplicity and ignorance' than at others, and at length its efforts had proved successful. It is true that the vicarage was to be re-ordained twice in the future and that the priory was even to lose the advowson temporarily to the Crown at the end of Richard II's reign<79>, but none of these incidents affected the permanency of the appropriation as such and, in any case, all fell outside the period covered by the priory record. The clearest message which emerged from this account was the need for constant vigilance on the part of religious houses in possession of parish churches, since other parties, both lay and ecclesiastical, were likely to be ready to exploit any tardiness of claim or weakness of title. At almost every stage of the history it was Maiden Bradley's own initiative which secured its rights, most strikingly in the recovery of the appropriation in the 1330s. Without such initiative there was a time in the thirteenth century when the priory seemed destined to lose not only an earlier appropriation, but the advowson of the church as well. Had that situation become permanent, the intentions of Manasser Biset in the twelfth century would have remained sadly unfulfilled.

APPENDIX

All seven texts printed below are taken from the record in the Maiden Bradley cartulary (by permission of the British Library), but five of them survive also in other copies. In these cases the cartulary text has been printed and only significant variant readings noted for the other version. Abbreviated names and other words have been expanded in accordance with normal fourteenth-century spellings to conform with the remainder of the cartulary text - e.g., *Bradeleghe* and *pertinenciis*.

1. *Gift in free alms by Manasser Biset, steward of Henry II, to the leper women of Bradley of the churches of Rockbourne (Hants) and Kidderminster (Worcs) after the deaths of the incumbent parsons.* [1164 x 1171]

B.L. Add. Ms. 37503 (Maiden Bradley cartulary), fol. 30r [A], P.R.O. E 326/10051 (Ancient Deed B 10051) [B]

Sciant<^a> omnes qui sunt et qui venturi sunt<^a> quod ego Manasser(us)<^b> Biset dapifer H(enrici) regis Angl(orum)<^c> concessi et<^d> in perpetuam<^e> elemosinam donavi leprosis de Brad(eleghe) ecclesias de maneriis meis post decessum personarum, scilicet ecclesiam de Rokebourn<^f> de assensu et auctoritate Henr(ici) Wynton(iensis) episcopi post decessum Crispini, et ecclesiam de Kyderm(instre)<^g> post decessum Rob(erti) de Hurecote de assensu et auctoritate Rog(er)i Wigorn(iensis) episcopi. Quare volo et firmiter precipio quod eedem leprose habeant et possideant predictas ecclesias omni tempore cum omnibus pertin(enciis) suis bene et in pace, libere et quiete ab omnibus consuetudinibus malis, in bosco et<^h> plano, in pratis et pasturis, in aquis et molendinis, in viis et semitis et in omnibus rebus predictis ecclesiis adiacentibus. Hiis testibus<ⁱ>, et cetera.

a-a *presentes et futuri* B b *Maneset(us)* B c *Anglie* B
d omitted in A, supplied from B e *imperpetuam* A
f *Rokeburn*' B g *Kedeministr*' B h *in* B i B ends

Date After the consecration of Roger of Worcester and before the death of Henry of Winchester.

Note P.R.O. Ancient Deed B 10051 is not a true deed, but a parchment copy of six deeds (see below, note 6).

2. *Confirmation by King Henry II of Manasser Biset's gift* [1155 x 1158]

B.L. Add. Ms. 37503, fol. 30r-v [A]; P.R.O. C 66/185 (Patent Roll 9 Edward III, part 1), m.13 [B]

Henr(icus) rex Angl(orum) et dux Norm(annorum) et Acquitann(orum)<^a>et

comes And(egavorum) archiepiscopis, episcopis, abbatibus, comitibus, baronibus, justic(iariis), vic(ecomitibus), ministris et^b omnibus fidelibus suis tocius Angl(ie), salutem. Sciatis me concessisse et presenti carta confirmasse leprosis de Brad(eleghe)<^c> omnes ecclesias de terra Mans(er)i<^d> Biset dapiferi mei quas ipse Mans(er)us <^e> predictis leprosis concessit et in perpetuam <^f> elemosinam donavit, scilicet ecclesiam de Rokebourn'<^g> post decessum Crispini sacerdotis et ecclesiam de Kyder(minstre)<^h> post decessum Rob(er)ti clerici, cum omnibus pertin(enciis) suis. Quare volo et firmiter precipio quod eedem leprose habeant et teneant predictas ecclesias cum omnibus pertin(enciis) suis in bosco et plano, in pratis et pascuis, in aquis et molendinis, in viis et semitis, in terris et decimis, in capellis et in omnibus rebus eisdem ecclesiis adiacentibus, bene et in pace, libere et honorifice, solutas et quietas de geldis et auxiliis et placitis et querelis et omnibus consuetudinibus malis. Testibus<ⁱ>: Will(elm)o fratre regis, Reg(inaldo) comite de Corn(ubia), Will(elm)o comite de Ar(undello), Ric(ardo) de Hum(eto) con(estabulario)<^j>, Guar(ino) filio Ger(oldi) camer(ario), Jocelino de Baill(olo), Hug(on)e de Goven', Huberto de Wall', Walt(er)o de Dunstanvill(a), Ric(ardo) filio Torq'uill', Nigello de Broc, Ivone clerico, Martino de Capella, Bartholomeo Byset. Apud Broothestram in Nova Foresta.

- a Aquitan' B b Omitted in A, supplied from B c Bradelega B
d Maneserii B e M. B f imperpetuam A g Rocheb(ur)n' B
h Kedemunst' B i A ends with *et cetera*, the witness list being taken
from B j com' B

Date See above, p. 89.

3. *Inspeximus and confirmation by Mauger, bishop of Worcester, of the act by his predecessor, Bishop Henry de Sully, admitting and instituting Adam de Hurecote as perpetual vicar of Kidderminster at the presentation of the leper women of Bradley and with the consent of Robert the parson, to whom Adam shall pay 100s. annually.* [1200 x 1203]

B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 31r-v

Omnibus Christi fidelibus ad quos presens scriptum pervenerit Maug(er)us dei gr(aci)a Wygorn(iensis) episcopus, salutem in domino. Noverit universitas vestra quod nos cartam bone memorie Henr(ici) predecessoris nostri <^a> inspeximus in hec verba:

Universis sancte matris ecclesie filiis Henricus dei gr(aci)a Wygorn(iensis) episcopus, eternam in domino salutem. Noverit

universitas vestra nos ad presentacionem leprosarum de Bradeleghe, consensu Rob(er)ti persone ecclesie de Kyderm(instre), recepisce magistrum Adam de Hurecote perpetuum vicarium in eadem ecclesia annuatim reddendo predicto R(oberto) C. solidos, et prefatum A(dam) in eadem vicaria instituisse canonice. Et ut hoc in posterum^b ratum habeatur, sigilli nostri appositione corroboravimus. Hiis testibus, et cetera. [1193 x 1195]

Nos siquidem factum predecessoris nostri in hac parte ratum habentes, memoratam vicariam prenominato A(de) presenti pagina sigilli nostri appositione roborata duximus confirmand(am). Testibus hiis: Pet(ro) priore Wygorn(iensi), magistro Thoma de Tornac(o), Rog(er)o decano Wygorn(ie),^c Maceo decant'^c clerico, Petro caball(o) clerico, et aliis pluribus.

a Ms has *sui*

b Ms has *imposterum*

c-c Reading uncertain. The name is followed by *Wygorn'* deleted.

Date See below, note 13.

4. *Notification by Calixtus, rural dean of Kidderminster, that on a mandate of Mauger, bishop of Worcester, he has inducted the leper sisters of Bradley into the parsonage of the church of Kidderminster by Andrew, their proctor.* [1200 x 1212]

B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fols. 30v-31r [A]; P.R.O. E 326/10051 [B]

Universis sancte matris ecclesie filiis ad quos presens scriptum pervenerit Calixtus decanus de Kyderm(instre)^a, salutem in domino. Universitati vestre innotescat me ad mandatum domini Maugeri Wygorn(iensis) episcopi in corporalem possessionem personatus ecclesie de Kyd(erminstre) sorores leprosas de Bradel(eghe) per Andream procuratorem suum misisse. Et ut hoc in omnibus presenti et futuris temporibus notum fiat, scripto presenti sigillum meum apposui. Hiis testibus^b: Ric(ard)o capellano de Kyd(erminstre), Rob(er)to capellano de Wlferdesl(e), Laur(encio) capellano de Chedest', Walt(ero) capellano de Stanes, Philippo capellano de Mutton', Rob(erto) diacono de Chedesl', Rob(er)to de Chedeston', Rog(er)o diacono de Kyderm(instre), Thoma sacrista de Kyderm(instre), Hamone clerico, Hugone Spiryng, et multis aliis.

a *Kedeministr'* B

b B ends.

Date The dating limits are those of Mauger's episcopate.

5. *Grant by William de Blois, bishop of Worcester, to the leper sisters of Bradley of a benefice of 20 marks in the church of Kidderminster, to be received annually from him who shall hold the church for the time.* [1218 x 1228; ? 1222 x 1228]

B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 31v [A]; P.R.O. E 326/10051 [B]

Universis Christi fidelibus presentes litteras inspecturis Will(el)m(u)s miseratione divina Wygorn(iensis) episcopus, eternam in domino salutem. Noverit universitas vestra nos divine pietatis intuitu concessisse domui de Brad(eleghe) et sororibus leprosis eiusdem domus beneficium .xx. marcarum in ecclesia de Kyd(erminstre)<^a>, in qua eedem leprose<^b> sorores jus habent patronatus. Ita scilicet<^c> quod singulis annis percipient predictas .xx. marcas de predicta ecclesia nomine perpetui beneficii per manum illius qui eandem ecclesiam pro tempore optinebit ad duos terminos, decem scilicet marcas ad festum beati Michaelis et .x. marcas ad Pascha, salvis nobis et successoribus nostris in omnibus episcopalibus consuetudinibus et Wygorn(iensis) ecclesie dignitate. Ut autem hec nostra<^d> concessio rata et firma permaneat, presens scriptum sigilli nostri impressione roboravimus. Hiis testibus.

a Kedeministr' B

b Omitted in B

c videlicet B

d mea B

Date See above, p. 92

6. *Assignment by Walter de Cantilupe, bishop of Worcester, to the leper house of Bradley of specific tithes in the parish of Kidderminster in place of the rent of 20 marks which it had by grant of the bishop's predecessor, William de Blois, bishop of Worcester.* May 1240 x May 1241

B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 32r [A]; P.R.O. E 210/3061 (Ancient Deed D 3061) [B]

Universis Christi fidelibus Walt(erus) divina miseratione Wygorn(iensis) ecclesie minister humilis, salutem in domino. Noverit universitas vestra quod, cum bone memorie Will(el)m(u)s de<^a> Bleys Wygorn(iensis) episcopus predecessor noster de consensu capituli sue caritatis intuitu contulisset sororibus leprosis hospitalis de Bradeleghe<^b> et fratribus in eodem loco deo servientibus redditum .xx. marcarum in ecclesia de Kyderm(instre)<^c> eisdem per manus rectoris ipsius<^d> ecclesie qui pro tempore fuerit persolvend(um), nos de assensu patroni et expressa voluntate Rog(er)i de Essex'<^e> rectoris<^f> ecclesie sororibus et fratribus memoratis certas decimas in parochia predicta de Kyd(erminstre)<^g> pro dicto annuo redditu .xx. marcarum duximus assignand(as) et eisdem pontificali auctoritate in perpetuum<^h> confirmand(as). Videlicet omnes decimas garbarum et feni omnium terrarum que sunt in predicta parochia infra Sabrinam et Sturam in parte occidentali, exceptis tantummodo decimis garbarum et feni que ad villam de Mutton' pertinere dinoscuntur, et exceptis decimis provenientibus de terris quas burgenses de

Kyderm(instre)<e> tenent in feodo inter Sabrinam et Sturam in parochia memorata. Nolumus tamen quod sorores et fratres supradicti occasione huius nostre assignacionis <i>et confirmacionis<i> aliquas decimas percipiant de terris in predicta parochia futuris temporibus assartandis, set eas ad matricem ecclesiam volumus pertinere. Et ut hec assignacio et confirmacio nostra perpetuis temporibus stabilis et firma permaneat, eam presenti scripto et sigilli nostri munimine duximus roborand(am). Hiis testibus<i>: Walt(er)o de Colyngham sen(escallo), magistro Ric(ard)o de Fraxino, Ric(ard)o de Coventr(eia), Hug(one) de Bosco, et aliis. Dat(um) apud Kemeseye pontificatus nostri anno quarto. Valet, et cetera.

a le A b Bradeleg' B c Kydeminist' B d eiusdem B
 e Exsex B f insert illius B g Kyderminst' B
 h imperpetuum A i-i omitted in B j B ends.

Date Walter de Cantilupe was consecrated on 3 May 1237.

Note P.R.O. Ancient Deed D 3061 is not a true deed, but a fourteenth-century copy made in the form of a deed with slits for a seal tag in the fold at the bottom. It is endorsed in a fourteenth-century hand: *Assignacio decimarum facta per Walt(eru)m episcopum Wygorn(iensem)*.

7. Report by H., official of the archdeacon of Worcester, to Godfrey Giffard, bishop of Worcester, of the inquest de iure patronatus held in response to the bishop's mandate following the presentation by Maiden Bradley priory of William de la Lade to the church of Kidderminster. 13 October 1276

B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 34r-v

Venerabili in Christo patri ac domino reverendo domino G(odefrido) dei gr(aci)a Wyg(orniensi) episcopo suus humilis et devotus H. officialis domini archidiaconi Wygorn(iensis), salutem et tam debitam quam devotam cum omni subiectione reverenciam et obedienciam. Mandatum vestrum recepi<a> in hec verba:

G(odefridus) permissione divina episcopus Wygorn(iensis) dilecto in Christo filio archidiacono Wygorn(iensi) vel eius officiali, salutem gr(aci)a(m) et benedictionem. Presentarunt nobis religiosi viri prior et conventus de Maydenebr(adeleghe) magistrum Will(elmu)m de la Lade ad ecclesiam de Kyd(erminstre) vacantem et ad eorum presentacionem spectantem<c>, ut dicunt. Quo circa vobis mandamus quatinus super omnibus et singulis articulis huiusmodi negocium contingentibus in pleno loci capitulo diligencius inquiratis veritatem. Et quid super hiis inveneritis nos per litteras vestras patentes harum

tenorem habentes reddatis certiores. Valete. Dat(e) apud Wyk' iuxta Wygorn(iam) vi. non' Octobris, cons(e)cracionis) nostre anno octavo. [2 October 1276]<>

Cuius auctoritate mandati diligentem super premiss(is) feci inquisitionem in pleno capitulo decanatus de Kyd(erminstre) apud Elmele Lovet die martis proxima post octabas sancti Michaelis, anno domini M^oCC^olxx^o sexto, celebrato per rectores, vicarios et capellanos paroch(iales) eiusdem decanatus. Qui dicunt quod dicta ecclesia de Kyderm(instre) vacat per mortem magistri Joh(an)nis de la Mare ultimi rectoris eiusdem extra porcionem dictorum prioris et conventus in eadem quam percipiunt inter Sabrinam et Sturam in garbis et feno. Et cepit vacare die jovis proxima post festum Nat(ivitatis) beate Marie virginis proxime preterit(um) [10 September 1276]. Item dicunt quod dominus Joh(an)n(e)s Biset, qui fuit dominus de Kyd(erminstre) et patronus ecclesie eiusdem, penultimo present(avit) Rog(eru)m de Essex' clericum ad eandem, qui ad presentacionem suam fuit admissus et institutus in eadem. Ac mortuo postmodum dicto domino Joh(an)ne, domina Alicia que fuit uxor sua dotata fuit in toto manerio de Kyderme(n)str(e) cum advocacione dicte ecclesie et omnibus aliis pert(inenciis). Que domina Alicia, mortuo postmodum domino Rog(er)o, present(avit) ad dictam ecclesiam dictum magistrum Joh(anne)m de la Mare, qui ad present(acionem) suam fuit admissus et institutus in eadem. Ac postmodum dicta Alic(ia) mortua, descendebat dictum manerium cum advocacione ecclesie et aliis pert(inenciis) ad tres heredes dicti domini Joh(ann)is Biset, videlicet ad dominum Joh(anne)m de Rip(ar)iis, filium et heredem Marg(erie) primogenite filie dicti domini Joh(annis) Biset, et ad duas minores sorores dicte Marg(er)ie, scilicet Elam et Isabellam, que totum ius quod habuerunt in advocacione dicte ecclesie predicto Joh(ann) i de Rip(ar)iis remiserunt<d>. Postmodum vero idem dominus Joh(an)n(e)s de Rip(ar)iis totam partem suam in dicto manerio cum advocacione dicte ecclesie et omnibus aliis pert(inenciis) caritatis intuitu contulit in puram et perpetuam elemosinam priori et conventui memoratis, qui sunt et diu fuerunt in possessione dicte partis, et sic dicunt quod ad presens ius presentandi ad eandem spectat ad prefatos religiosos tamquam ad veros patronos eiusdem. Item dicunt quod non est litigiosa nec pensionaria, nisi in hoc quod prefati prior et conventus percipiunt predictas garbas et fenum ut predictum est. Dicunt etiam quod predicta ecclesia vacans estimabitur communibus annis duodecim marcarum. Magister Will(elmus) ad eandem present(atus) est legitimus<e>, libere condicionis, bone fame et conversacionis<f> honeste. In cuius rei testimonium has litteras meas sub sigillo meo inclusas reverende paternitati vestre transmitto patentes. Valeat paternitas vestra reverenda per tempora longa. Dat(e) die et loco et anno supradictis.

- a Ms has *recepimus*
- b-b omitted in Ms, supplied to make the sense.
- c Ms has *spectantes*
- d omitted, but supplied for the sense.
- e reading uncertain.
- f Ms inserts *et* in error.

Note 1. This is clearly the correct date, although the date given in the text is strictly 2 October 1275.

NOTES

1. For convenience I have referred to the house throughout this essay as Maiden Bradley priory, except when quoting from contemporary sources, but this is not accurate for the whole of the period under review. The house began life as a leper house for women and did not definitely have a prior and convent of Augustinian canons attached to it before the early thirteenth century (*V(ictoria) C(ounty) H(istory)*, *Wiltshire*, III, 299) - even so, as late as 1335 Pope Benedict XII described the head of the house as 'the rector, commonly called the prior' (see above p.101). The name of the place was originally Bradley and did not become Maiden Bradley, called so on account of the leper women's house there, until the second half of the thirteenth century.
2. This essay is not concerned with the church of Rockbourne (Hants), except to note that before Manasser Biset's death Maiden Bradley had lost it to Breamore priory (Hants) in return for an annual payment of 100s. See *V.C.H., Hampshire*, II, 169; IV, 586.
3. B.L. Additional Manuscript 37503, fols. 30r-56r.
4. Although surviving originals are few, some of the texts are also found in other copies, especially the acts of fourteenth-century bishops of Worcester, which were entered in the appropriate episcopal registers.
5. J.R. Burton, *A History of Kidderminster*, London 1890.
6. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 30r (printed above, Appendix, no.1). The text is also preserved in P.R.O. E 326/10051 (Ancient Deed B 10051), a small parchment containing copies of six deeds relating to the church of Kidderminster, all without witnesses, which probably belonged to Maiden Bradley priory.
7. Printed above, Appendix, no.2.
8. P.R.O. C66/185 (Patent Roll 9 Edward III, part 1), m.13; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1334-1338*, p.113. See also above, pp. 101-2.
9. H.G. Richardson and G.O. Sayles, *The Governance of Medieval England*, Edinburgh 1963, pp.436-7.
10. R.W. Eyton, *Court, Household and Itinerary of King Henry II*, London 1878, pp. 34-5.
11. The confirmation probably dates between 1187, when Henry Biset came of age (I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies*, Oxford 1960, p.5), and 1195, the latest date possible

for the appointment of the vicar of Kidderminster (see below), of which no mention is made in Henry's confirmation. The text is also in P.R.O. E 326/10051 (see note 6).

12. W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley and others, London 1817-30, VII, 644. The text has most recently been printed by M. G. Cheney, *Roger, Bishop of Worcester 1164-1179*, Oxford 1980, p.276.

13. Printed above, Appendix, no.3. The dating limits are determined by the bishop's consecration in 1200 and the deposition of Peter, prior of Worcester, who appears among the witnesses, on 24 December 1203 (*Annales Monastici*, IV, 392, ed. H.R. Luard, Rolls Series 1869).

14. The omission is not surprising. The difficulty arises in the passage of narrative just quoted, which combines in a single reference the situations obtaining before and after the death of Robert. Robert was to receive 100s until his death, after which the same sum would be paid to the priory.

15. On this type of perpetual vicarage, see C.R. Cheney, *From Becket to Langton*, Manchester 1956, p.133; B.R. Kemp, 'Monastic Possession of Parish Churches in England in the Twelfth Century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31, 1980, 150-3.

16. Printed above, Appendix, no.4. The text is also in P.R.O. E 326/10051 (see note 6).

17. Kemp, p.152. Among the examples most recently published is that of the incumbent of Toppesfield (Essex), a church in the possession of Stoke by Clare priory - *Stoke by Clare Cartulary*, part i, pp.83-4, ed. C. Harper-Bill and R. Mortimer, Suffolk Records Society, Suffolk Charters, 1982. In this case an act of Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London, dating c.1179 x 81, refers to a perpetual vicar paying a pension of 4 marks to the monks, while another of Bishop William de Ste Mère-Eglise, dating 1200 x 16, speaks of a rector paying the same pension.

18. For the rights and responsibilities of monastic patrons at this time, see S. Wood, *English Monasteries and their Patrons in the Thirteenth Century*, Oxford 1955.

19. The Ms reads *abeunte dicto A. vicario*, but *abeunte* is probably an error for *obeunte*, since otherwise the expression is very unusual and singularly imprecise.

20. The act is printed above, Appendix, no.5. The text is also in P.R.O. E 326/10051 (see note 6). The outside dating limits are provided by the consecration of William de Blois and the death of Archbishop Stephen Langton, who confirmed this act (see below). If the confirmation by Prior William and the convent of Worcester, mentioned below, relates to this act (and it seems almost certain that it does), the act may be not earlier than 1222, when Prior William Norman was appointed (*Annales Monastici*, IV, 415).

21. The limits were 4 months for a benefice in lay gift and 6 months for a benefice in ecclesiastical gift. The latter applied in this case, since one of the parties disputing the patronage was a religious house.

22. P.R.O. E 210/2964 (Ancient Deed D 2964); printed, *Acta Stephani Langton*, pp.136-7, ed. K. Major, Canterbury and York Society, 50, 1950. The text is also in P.R.O. E 326/10051 (see note 6).

23. P.R.O. E 326/10051 (see note 6).

24. See note 20.

25. See below.

26. Sanders, p. 5.

27. *The Book of Fees*, I, 141.

28. J.C. Holt, *The Northerners*, Oxford 1961, p. 106.

29. *V.C.H., Worcestershire*, III, 159.

30. This deed has not survived.

31. Printed above, Appendix, no.6. Another text is P.R.O. E 210/3061 (Ancient Deed D 3061), which, though in the form of a deed, is in fact a fourteenth-century copy without witnesses.

32. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 32r.

33. *Ibid.*, fol. 32v. The original is P.R.O. E 210/3147 (Ancient Deed D 3147). The prior was Richard of Condicote, who was appointed in 1242 (*Annales Monastici*, I, 127, ed. H.R. Luard, Rolls Series 1864.)

34. See below and *V.C.H., Worcestershire*, III, 159-60.

35. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fols. 11v, 13v-14r, 23v; *V.C.H., Worcestershire*, III, 168-9.

36. B.L. Harley Charter 55 D 25. In 1346 and 1428 Maiden Bradley priory and two other tenants were recorded as separately holding in total a third part of 1 knight's fee in Kidderminster (*Feudal Aids*, V, 302, 323).

37. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 33r-v.

38. This has been compiled from evidence in the manuscript and from Sanders, pp.5-6.

39. *Monasticon*, VII, 644. According to *V.C.H., Wiltshire*, III, 301, Prior John's predecessor at Maiden Bradley occurs down to c.1248.
40. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fols. 54v-55r. The charter of John Wotton and Ela Biset is also entered *ibid.*, fols. 26v-27r, outside the section of the cartulary devoted to the record.
41. C.R. Cheney, p.138; M. Gibbs and J. Lang, *Bishops and Reform*, Oxford 1934, p. 162; J.R.H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge 1945, pp.90-92.
42. On the inquest *de iure patronatus*, see J.W. Gray, 'The Ius Praesentandi in England from the Constitutions of Clarendon to Bracton', *English Historical Review*, 67, 1952, 491-3.
43. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 34r-v (printed above, Appendix, no.7).
44. The details here are very similar to those in the narrative relating to events after Alice Basset's death (above, pp.95-6), save that the inquest makes it quite clear that it was John de Ripariis who conveyed the advowson to the priory with his part of the Biset manor, after the other heirs had remitted their right in the advowson to him.
45. At the next vacancy, in 1281 (see below), the inquest explicitly derived the assessment of 12 marks from the Norwich Valuation - *Et est estimacionis duodecim marcarum secundum taxacionem in North'wich'* (B.L. Add.Ms.37503, fol. 35r). It is curious, but (in the light of subsequent developments) probably not very significant, that this sum is 19 marks (i.e., not quite 20 marks, the value of the priory's portion) short of the 31 marks at which the church was to be valued in the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV of 1291 (see below).
46. This is not stated specifically, but he did become rector and the next vacancy in the rectory was caused by his death (see below).
47. Gray, p.491.
48. *Register of Bishop Godfrey Giffard*, II, 128, ed. J.W. Willis Bund, Worcestershire Historical Society 1902.
49. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fols. 34v-35r.
50. *Ibid.*, fols. 35v-36r.
51. See *Registrum Simonis de Gandavo, Diocesis Saresbiriensis*, II, 663, ed. C.T. Flower and M.C.B. Dawes, Canterbury and York Society 1934. John de Ubeton was presented to that living by the patrons, the abbess and convent of Wilton, upon

whom he had been in attendance since 1303, having obtained licences for absence from Kidderminster for this purpose - *The Register of William de Geynesburgh*, pp.80, 129, ed. J.W. Willis Bund, Worcestershire Historical Society 1929.

52. *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae auctoritate P. Nicholai IV*, p.217, Record Commission 1802.

53. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 36r; *Register of William de Geynesburgh*, p.147.

54. Robert le Blake was certainly dead by 13 April 1312, when administration of his goods, he having died intestate, was committed to the rural dean of Kidderminster (*The Register of Walter Reynolds, Bishop of Worcester 1308-1313*, ed. R.A. Wilson, Dugdale Society, 9, 1928, 37-38). John de Carseleghe's institution is dated 24 June 1312 (*Ibid.*, p.154).

55. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fols. 36r-37r.

56. Ms. has 'pension'.

57. *Taxatio*, p.217.

58. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 37v.

59. See below for the valuation of the church in 1336, following the new appropriation, and the ordinations of the vicarage in 1336 and 1340, which scrupulously protect the priory's portion and/or its immunity from taxation.

60. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 38r.

61. *Ibid.*, fol. 38r-v; printed in translation, Burton, pp. 104-5.

62. I am grateful to Professor C.R. Cheney and Dr. P.N.R. Zutshi for help on this point.

63. John de Carseleghe, the rector, was a man of some distinction in the diocese, having served as the bishop's official under Adam of Orleton in 1332-34 - R.M. Haines, *The Administration of the Diocese of Worcester in the first half of the Fourteenth Century*, London 1965, p.324.

64. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 39r; also *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1334-1338*, p.113.

65. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fols. 39r-41r; Hereford and Worcester Record Office, Register of Simon Montacute, bishop of Worcester (unpublished), I, fols. 20v - 21r. I owe this, and the other reference to Montacute's register given in note 70, to the kindness of Professor R.M. Haines.

66. The cathedral priory of Worcester was also to be immune from payment of all tithes in its parks of Trimpley and Eymore within the parish.

67. See Haines, pp.115, 252 and note 7; R.L. Storey, *Diocesan Administration in Fifteenth-Century England*, 2nd. edn., York 1972, p.7.

68. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 41r-v; fols. 41v-42v. The latter quotes a deed by Prior Henry and the convent of Maiden Bradley, dated 15 November 1335, agreeing to pay the cathedral priory 1 mark annually and confirming that its parks of Trimpley and Eymore are quit of tithes. See also *The Liber Albus of the Priory of Worcester*, p.92, calendared by J.M. Wilson, Worcestershire Historical Society 1919; and *Liber Pensionum Prioratus Wigorn.*, pp.8-9, calendared by C. Price, *ibid.* 1925.

69. B.L. Add. Ms. 37503, fols. 42v-43r; fols. 43r-45r. The details of the rural dean's reply are abstracted in Burton, pp.106-9.

70. B.L. Add. Ms. 37503, fols. 45r-46v; Reg. Montacute (unpublished), I, fols. 24v-25r.

71. B.L. Add. Ms. 37503, fols. 46v-47r. This act was inspected and confirmed by the next bishop, Wolstan of Bransford, on 28 January 1340 (*Ibid.*, fols. 49v-50r).

72. *Ibid.*, fols. 47v-48r.

73. *Ibid.*, fol. 48r.

74. *Ibid.*, fol. 48r-v; fols. 48v-49v. The vicar was admitted and instituted by the archdeacon's official as special commissary of the bishop in this matter (*A Calendar of the Register of Wolstan de Bransford*, p.75, prepared by R.M. Haines, Worcestershire Historical Society and Historical Manuscripts Commission 1966).

75. It was not until 19 November that the bishop inspected and confirmed the archdeacon's official's letters of 20 July regarding the admission, institution and induction of the new vicar. (*Ibid.*, p.75).

76. B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fols. 50r-54r. The original is P.R.O. E 328/132 (Ancient Deed BB 132). The text is calendared from the bishop's register, *Register of Wolstan de Bransford*, pp.39-41.

77. This was the amount recorded by the rural dean in February 1336 as the average annual cost of repairs to the chancel (B.L. Add.Ms. 37503, fol. 44r).

78. The record concludes with a notarial instrument in the name of Vincent de Tarenta, clerk of the diocese of Salisbury, recording the vicar's oath to pay this sum annually to the priory, under the rubric: 'Instrument as to how the vicars of Kidderminster, whoever they shall be for the time, shall make oath to the house of

Bradley before the convent of the place and also before the lord bishop of Worcester.' (*Ibid.*, fols. 55r-56r).

79. *V.C.H.*, *Worcestershire*, III, 175.